

researchers and extension experts studied the movement of soil, plant nutrients, herbicides, and insecticides in surface runoff from corn and sugarcane, and taught growers how to maintain profits while reducing the amount of herbicide in Louisiana surface waters. In Nebraska, SPLASH is an extension program which teaches irrigators one-on-one how to reduce water, energy, and fertilizer use. This program has saved 46.4 million gallons of water on about 35,000 acres irrigated by cooperators.

■ **Surviving and Thriving in the Global Marketplace**

If there is one hot commodity that's already commanding a premium in the international marketplace, it's information that helps American farmers improve their bottom lines and lowers grocery bills for consumers. Research and education programs funded by USDA-CSREES are helping U.S. producers survive and thrive at a time when new trade agreements are altering the global landscape. For example, Illinois researchers have found that high-quality soybeans command higher prices in European and Japanese markets, and that some foreign buyers are now specifying oil and protein contents in their contracts. These studies provided producers with incentives to revise soybean grades for more than 60 percent of U.S. exports. An innovative cattle breeding project at Washington State University has built a herd of Wagyu cattle imported from Japan, after studies showed that the breed could be produced in the Pacific Northwest and its beef marketed in the United States and Japan at premium prices.

Economic Research Service

Food assistance programs. Climate change. Risk management. Trade liberalization. Water quality. Concentration in agricultural industries. Agricultural productivity. Nutrition. Exports of U.S. farm products. Rural population trends. Food safety concerns.

The economics of these topics and many more are analyzed by USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), the Department's social science research agency. As such, ERS provides information and analysis that is used by public officials in developing, administering, and evaluating food, farm, conservation, and rural policies and programs, as well as by consumers, agribusinesses, and farm operators in their decisionmaking. ERS analysts monitor and evaluate many issues requiring policy decisions by the Administration and Congress.

The agency has four principal functions: research, development of economic and statistical indicators, situation and outlook analysis, and staff analysis.

ERS analyzes and monitors such areas as:

- Environmental issues.
- Nutrition education and food assistance, food safety regulation, determinants of consumer demand for quality and safety, and food marketing trends and developments.
- National and international commodity markets and production agriculture.
- The economic well-being of the rural economy, the financial performance of the farm sector, and the implications of changing farm credit and financial market structures.

ERS information is made available to the public through research publications, situation and outlook reports, e-mail and the World Wide Web, newspapers, magazines, radio, and frequent participation of ERS staff at public forums. ERS publishes several periodicals, including *Agricultural Outlook*, *FoodReview*, and *Rural America*.

The agency's products are available through a variety of formats. Printed reports can be ordered through the ERS-NASS sales desk at 1-800-999-6779. Studies, data bases, issue briefs, and other types of information are available on the ERS web site at www.econ.ag.gov and the ERS AutoFax system at 202-694-5700.

National Agricultural Statistics Service

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), "*The Fact Finders for U.S. Agriculture*," is the official data collection arm of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The only way to "tell the story" of the phenomenal success of American agriculture is by having data available that measure productivity. Having accurate, timely information available is not only important to tell the success story of American agriculture, but it is vital to support the efficient handling of commodities in today's global market.

The NASS mission is to serve the basic agricultural and rural data needs of the people of the United States, those working in agriculture, and those living in rural communities by objectively providing important, usable, and accurate statistical information and services needed to make informed decisions.

The NASS program has successfully met many challenges over the last 138 years to provide data to meet demands from a multitude of data users. These data are geared toward producers to help them plan planting, feeding, breeding, and marketing programs. Other major uses of these statistical data include the following:

- Timely, accurate data are essential in establishing and maintaining a market place where price is determined by real facts rather than speculation and rumors.
- Sound data are needed for resolving environmental issues, rather than worst case scenarios.
- Exporters of American farm products rely on accurate information.
- Our transportation-storage industry relies on the statistics in its efforts to move agricultural products to market.
- Suppliers use the data to allocate the necessary inputs farmers need to grow their crops or raise livestock.